

Remarks at a Democratic Hope Fund Dinner in Los Angeles, California
February 11, 2016

Well, let me begin by thanking Sam and Leah. I've come to a lot of events in California, and all across the country, and I've decided I want to buy this house. [*Laughter*] Now, I don't have the mortgage yet, but—[*laughter*]. We are so grateful for your hospitality and your graciousness. And I want to thank everybody who is here. A lot of folks here have been supporters of mine since I was running for the U.S. Senate, not just the Presidency. And to be back with you again and to see how you've stuck with us through thick and thin is something that I'm extremely grateful for.

Because this is a smaller group, I want to spend most of my time in a discussion, take your questions, take your comments, take your advice. Everybody has got advice. [*Laughter*] So I'm not going to speak too long at the top, just to set the stage.

When I came into office, the country was in a bad way. We were losing 800,000 jobs a month. We were on the brink of a Great Depression. Millions of people didn't have health care, despite us being the wealthiest nation on Earth. We were in the midst of two wars. We were not in any serious way addressing climate change. Iran was on the brink of reaching breakout capacity for a nuclear weapon. Our standing around the world was diminished.

And because of your support and the hard work of a lot of people, not just in the administration, but outside of it, the country is indisputably better off now than it was. The economy has recovered. We've taken unemployment from 10 percent down to 4.9 percent. Eighteen million people have health care who didn't have it before. We put in place serious mechanisms to reduce our carbon pollution, and helped to mobilize an international response to climate change. We doubled the production of clean energy and creating good jobs here in America.

On social justice issues from ending "don't ask, don't tell" to helping to usher in an era in which no matter who you are, you can marry who you love, to dealing with our criminal justice system in a smarter way that keeps us safe, but also ensures that people who serve their time are able to reintegrate into society, we have moved the needle forward. And as Sam said, the question now is, how do we sustain that?

The most important thing we can do to sustain that progress is to make sure that we regain the Senate, we move towards regaining seats in the House, and we have a Democratic President. And this is a pretty sophisticated group, so I don't have to tell you what's at stake. Everything from Supreme Court appointments to our ability to sustain our leadership on climate change, to continue to make progress on closing the gap in opportunity for children all across this country—all those things are going to depend on what we do over the next several months.

This is a volatile time in politics because people are anxious. People are anxious from the experiences they had in 2007 and 2008. They're frustrated about long-term trends of inequality and the fact that wages and incomes haven't gone up as fast as, in many cases, corporate profits have. They're worried about disorder in the world and protecting America from groups like ISIL. And sometimes, when people are afraid, politics can take a bad turn.

And it's our job to make sure that we tap into those best impulses of the American people, and we bring people together instead of dividing them, and we are tough and principled about the things that we believe in, but we also set a tone that ensures that this greatest democracy on Earth continues for our children and our grandchildren.

So I want to thank you for what you've done, but more importantly, I'm going to thank you in advance for what you are going to do. Because I need you to feel just as much urgency about this election as any election that I've been involved with. I will not be on any ballot ever again. [Laughter] And I think that's something I'm pleased with, but not as pleased as Michelle is. [Laughter] But as I was saying in my remarks earlier today, that Justice Brandeis once said the most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. And that office I will retain, alongside you.

And our job is to work as hard as we can to make sure that we fulfill our responsibilities. If we do, then I'm confident that we'll get the kind of government and kind of politics that we deserve and the next generation deserves.

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:38 p.m. at the residence of Samuel N. and Leah S. Fisher. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 12. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

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